



AMBASSADOR SEN UNVEILS RIVERSIDE MAHATMA GANDHI MONUMENT

Ambassador Ronen Sen joined Mayor Ronald O. Loveridge for the formal unveiling and dedication of the Mahatma Gandhi monument in the historic Mission Inn District of Downtown Riverside on January 18, 2007.

Addressing an audience of about 200 who braved chilly winds to attend the dedication ceremonies, and later a dinner in his honor, Ambassador Sen noted that Gandhi's practice of nonviolence made him more than the father of India's independence. "He really belongs to humanity," Sen said.

The ambassador also recalled that the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. had visited India to learn about the Mahatma's message: "He (King) said that his visit was more than a visit to India. It was, in his words, a pilgrimage to the home of Mahatma Gandhi."

Echoing the Ambassador's sentiments, Mayor Loveridge said that the Gandhi monument was a shining testimony to Riverside's commitment to inclusiveness, diversity, peace and tolerance. He applauded the sculptors of the statue, Nasik's Madan and Aruna Garge, "for creating a unique and timeless vision of humanity."

The nine-foot, 1.5 ton bronze centerpiece of the half-a-million dollar Gandhi monument is a narrative sculpture titled, "Tower of Human Values." Gandhi, as the fountainhead of the civil rights movements of the 20th century, is shown rising out of a cresting wave into which are carved events from his life such as the famous Dandi March, principles such as truth that he lived and died for, and the people he influenced—the Rev. King, South Africa's Nelson Mandela, Mother Theresa, United Farm Workers founder, Cesar Chavez, and Afghanistan's Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, Gandhi's disciple who was famously known as "Frontier Gandhi."

Framing the statue are Champa trees along walkways of Indian granite and slate. Inscribed all around are sayings by Gandhi and tributes to him by prominent Americans like Albert Einstein. Two granite books on site summarize Gandhi's life, and the different figures represented on the statue.

Riverside resident Lalit Acharya, spearheaded the campaign to put up the Gandhi monument. The Gandhi Peace Foundation he created raised about \$400,000 in cash and about \$100,000 in donated services to make the memorial possible.

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